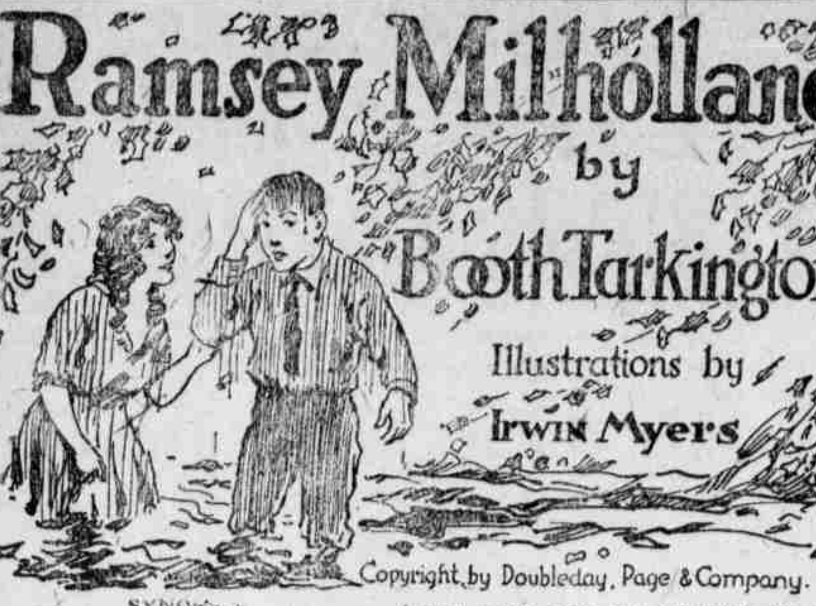


SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—With his grandfather, small Ramsey Milholland is watching the "Decoration Day Parade" in the home town. The old gentleman, a veteran of the Civil war, endeavors to impress the youngster with the significance of the great conflict, and many years afterward the boy was to remember his words with startling vividness.

CHAPTER II.—In the schoolroom, a few years afterward, Ramsey was not distinguished for remarkable ability, though his two pronounced dislikes were arithmetic and "Recitations." In sharp contrast to Ramsey's backwardness is the precocity of little Dora Yocum, a young lady whom in his bitterness he denominates "Teacher's Pet."

CHAPTER III.—In high school, where he and Dora are classmates, Ramsey continues to feel that the girl delights to manifest her superiority, and the vindictiveness he generates becomes alarming, culminating in the resolution that some day he would "show" her.

CHAPTER IV.—At a class picnic Ramsey, to his intense surprise, appears to attract the favorable attention of Miss Milla Rust, a young lady of about his own age and the acknowledged belle of the class. Milla has the misfortune to fall into a creek while talking with Ramsey, and that youth promptly plunges to the rescue. The water is only some three feet deep, but Milla's gratitude for his heroic act is embarrassing. He is in fact taken captive by the fair one, to his great consternation.

CHAPTER V.—The acquaintance ripens, Ramsey and Milla openly "keeping company," while the former's parents wonder. His mother indeed goes so far as to express some disapproval of his choice, even hinting that Dora Yocum would be a more suitable companion, a suggestion which the youth receives with horror.

CHAPTER VI.—At this period our hero gets the thrill of his "first kiss," Milla being a very willing partner in the act. Her flippancy over the matter disconcerts Ramsey immensely, but shortly afterward the girl departs for a visit to Chicago. She leaves an endearing missive for Ramsey, which adds to his feeling of melancholy.

CHAPTER VII.—Shortly after Milla's departure, her friend, Sadie Clews, informs Ramsey that his inamorata has been married to her cousin and is not coming back, so that little romance is ended. Within a few months Ramsey and his closest friend, Fred Mitchell, go to the state university, Ramsey's chief feeling being one of relief that he has got away from the detested Dora. To his horror he finds she is also a student at the university. Induced to join a debating society, Ramsey is chosen as Dora's opponent in a debate dealing with the matter of Germany's right to invade Belgium, Dora being assigned the negative side of the argument. Partly on account of his feelings toward Dora, and his natural nervousness, he makes a miserable showing and Dora carries off the honors. A brash youngster named Linski objects to the showing made by Ramsey and becomes personal in his remarks. The matter ends with Ramsey, in the university vernacular, giving Linski a "peach of a punch on the snoot."

"Yes," said the musing Colburn, "she's a mighty pretty girl."

"What!"

This exclamation was a simultaneous one; the astounded pair stared at him in blank incredulity.

"Why, don't you think so?" Colburn mildly inquired. "She seems to me very unusual looking."

"Well, yes," Fred assented emphatically. "We're with you there."

"Extraordinary eyes," continued Colburn. "Lovely figure, too; altogether a strikingly pretty girl. Handsome, I should say, perhaps. Yes, 'handsome' rather than 'pretty'." He looked up from a brief reverie. "You fellows known her long?"

"You bet!" said Ramsey.

"She made a splendid impression on the Lumen," Colburn went on. "I don't remember that I ever saw a first appearance there that quite equaled it. She'll probably have a brilliant career in the society, and in the university, too. She must be a very fine sort of a person." He deliberated within himself a few moments longer, then, realizing that his hosts and brethren did not respond with any heartiness—or with anything at all—to the theme, he changed it, and asked them what they thought about the war in Europe.

They talked of the war drowsily for a while; it was an interesting but not an exciting topic: the thing they spoke of was so far away. After a few moments of fervor, the conversation languished, and Brother Colburn rose to go.

"Well, I'm glad you gave that Linski a fine little punch, Brother Milholland," he said at the door. "It won't do you any harm in the 'frat,' or with the Lumen, either. And don't be discouraged about your debating. You'll [illegible] Anybody might have got rattled having to argue against as [illegible] good-looking a girl as that!"

The roommates gave each other a look of serious puzzlement as the door closed. "Well, Brother Colburn is a mighty nice fellow," Fred said. "He's kind of funny, though."

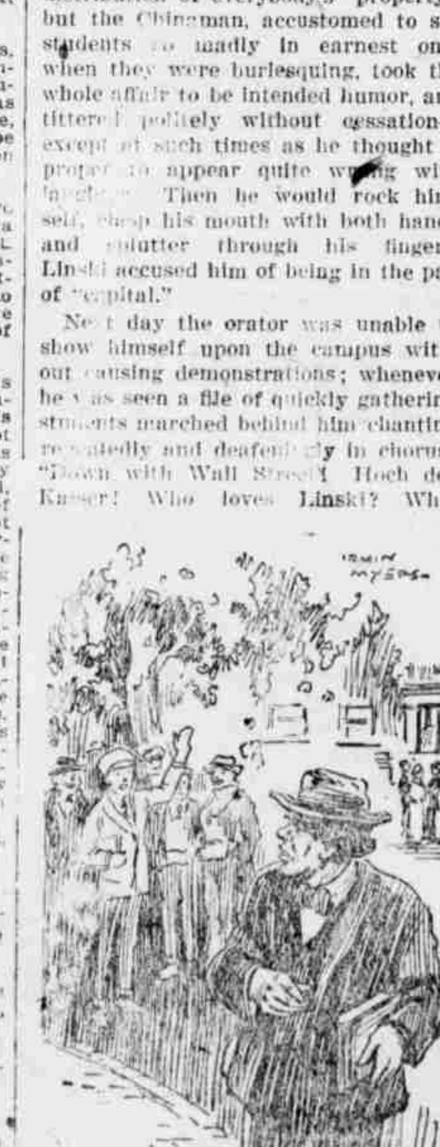
Ramsey assented, and then, as the two prepared for bed, they entered into a further discussion of their senior friend. They liked him "all right," they said, but he certainly must be kind of queer, and they couldn't just see how he had "ever managed to get where he was" in the "frat" and the Lumen and the university.

* * * * * * *

Ramsey passed the slightly disfigured Linski on the campus next day without betraying any embarrassment or making a sign of recognition. Fred Mitchell told his roommate, chuckling, that Linski had sworn to "get" him, had made him the confidant of his oath. Fred had given his blessing, he said, upon the enterprise, and advised Linski to use a brick. "He'll hit you on the head with it," said the light-hearted Fred, falling back upon this old joke. "Then you can catch it as it bounces off and throw it back at him."

However, Linski proved to be merely an episode, not only so far as Ramsey was concerned but in the Lumen and in the university as well. His suspension from the Lumen was for a year, and so cruel a punishment it proved for this born debater that he noisily declared he would found a debating society himself, and had a poster printed and distributed announcing the first meeting of "The Free Speech and Masses' Rights Council." Several town loafers attended the meeting, but the only person connected with the university who came was an oriental student, a Chinese youth of almost intrusive amiability. Linski made a fiery address, the townsmen loudly applauding his advocacy of an embargo on munitions and the distribution of everybody's "property," but the Chinaman, accustomed to see students so madly in earnest only when they were burlesquing, took the whole affair to be intended humor, and tittered politely without cessation—except at such times as he thought it proper to appear quite weak with laughter. Then he would rock himself, clasp his mouth with both hands and splutter through his fingers. Linski accused him of being in the pay of "capital."

Next day the orator was unable to show himself upon the campus without causing demonstrations; whenever he was seen a file of quickly gathering students marched behind him chanting repeatedly and deafeningly in chorus: "Down with Wall Street! Hoch der Kaiser! Who loves Linski? Who,



"Who Loves Linski? Who, Who, Who? Hoo Lun!"

who, who? Hoo Lun! Who loves Linski? Who, who, who? Hoo Lun!"

Linski was disgusted, resigned from the university, and disappeared.

"Well, here it isn't midyear Exams yet, and the good ole class of Nineteen-Eighteen's already lost a member," said Fred Mitchell. "I guess we can bear the break-up!"

"I guess so," Ramsey assented. "That Linski might just as well stayed here, though."

"Why?"

"He couldn't do any harm here. He'll prob'ly get more people to listen to him in cities where there's so many new immigrants and all such that don't know anything, comin' in all the time."

"Oh, well," said Fred. "What do we care what happens to Chicago! Come on, let's behave real wild, and go on over to the 'Teria and get us a couple of egg sandwiches and sassprilly."

Ramsey was willing.

After the strain of the "mid-year Exams" in February, the chums lived a free-hearted life. They had settled into the ways of their world; they had grown used to it, and it had grown used to them; there was no longer any ignominy in being a freshman. They romped upon the campus and sometimes rioted harmlessly about the streets of the town. In the evenings they visited their fellows and brethren who were visited in turn, horseplay prevailed, but collegiate gossip had its turn, and sometimes they looked so far ahead as to talk vaguely of their plans for professions or business—though to a freshman this concerned an almost unthinkably distant prospect. "I guess I'll go in with my father, in the wholesale drug business," said Fred. "My married brother already is in the firm, and I suppose they'll give me a show—send me out on the road a year or two first, maybe, to try me. Then I'm going to marry some little cutie and settle down. What you goin' to do, Ramsey? Go to law school, and then come back and go in your father's office?"

"I don't know. Guess so."

It was always Fred who did most of the talking; Ramsey was quiet. Fred told the "frat seniors" that Ramsey was "developing a whole lot these days;" and he told Ramsey himself that he could see a "big change" in him, adding that the improvement was probably due to Ramsey's having passed through "terrible trials like that debate."

Ramsey kept to their rooms more than his comrade did, one reason for this domesticity being that he "had to study longer than Fred did, to keep up;" and another reason may have been a greater shyness than Fred possessed—if, indeed, Fred possessed any shyness at all. For Fred was a cheery spirit difficult to abash, and by the coming of spring knew all of the best-looking girl students in the place—knew them well enough, it appeared, to speak of them not merely by their first names but by abbreviations of these. He had become fashion's sprig, a "fusser" and butterfly, and he reproached his roommate for shunning the ladies.

"Well, the truth is, Fred," said Ramsey one day, responding darkly—"well, you see the truth is, Fred, I've had a —a—I've had an experience—"

So, only, did he refer to Milla.

Fred said no more; and it was comprehended between them that the past need never be definitely referred to again, but that it stood between Ramsey and any entertainment to be obtained of the gentler but less trustworthy sex. And when other brethren of the "frat" would have pressed Ramsey to join them in various frivolous enterprises concerning "co-eds," or to be shared by "co-eds," Fred thought it better to explain to them privately (all being sacred among brethren) how Ramsey's life, so far as Girls went, had been toyed with by one now a Married Woman.

This created a great deal of respect for Ramsey. It became understood everywhere that he was a woman-hater.

CHAPTER IX.

That early spring of 1915 the two boys and their friends and brethren talked more of the war than they had in the autumn, though the subject was not at all an absorbing one; for the trenches of Flanders and France were still of the immense, remote distance. By no stretch of imagination could these wet trenches be thought greatly to concern the "frat," the Lumen, or the university. Really important matters were the doings of the "Track Team," now training in the "Gym" and on the 'Varsity field, and, more vital still, the prospects of the Nine. But in May there came a shock which changed things for a time.

The Lusitania brought to every American a revelation of what had lain so deep in his own heart that often he had not realized it was there. When the Germans hid in the sea and sent down the great merchant ship, with American babies and their mothers, and gallantly dying American gentlemen, there came a change even to girls and boys and professors, until then so preoccupied with their own little aloof world thousands of miles from the murder.

Fred Mitchell, ever volatile and generous, was one of those who went quite wild. No orator, he nevertheless made a frantic speech at the week's "frat meetings," cursing the Germans in the simple old English words that their performance had demonstrated to be applicable, and going on to demand that the fraternity prepare for its share in the action of the country. "I don't care how insignificant we few fellows here tonight may seem," he cried; "we can do our little, and if everybody in this country's ready to do their own little, why, that'll be plenty! Brothers, don't you realize that all over the United States tonight the people are feeling just the way we are here? Millions and millions and millions of them! Wherever there's an American he's with us—and you bet your bottom dollar there are just a few more Americans in this country of ours than there are big-mouthed lobsters like that fellow Linski! I tell you, if congress only gives the word, there could be an army of five million men in this country tomorrow, and those dirty baby-killin' dachshunds would hear a word or two from your Uncle Samuel! Brothers, I demand that something be done right here and now, and by us! I move we telegraph the secretary of war tonight and offer him a regiment from this university to go over and help hang their d—n kaiser."

The motion was hotly seconded and instantly carried. Then followed a much flustered discussion of the form and phrasing of the proposed telegram, but, after everything seemed to have been settled, some one ascertained by telephone that the telegraph company would not accept messages containing words customarily defined as profane; so the telegram had to be rewritten. This led to further amendment, and it was finally decided to address the senators from that state instead of the secretary of war, and thus in a somewhat modified form the message was finally dispatched.

Next day, news of what the "frat" had done made a great stir in the university. Other "frats" sent telegrams, so did the "Barbarians," haters of the "frats" but joining them in this; while a small band of "German-American" students found it their duty to go before the faculty and report these "breaches of neutrality." They protested heavily, demanding the expulsion of the "breachers" as disloyal citizens, therefore unfit students, but suffered a disappointment, for the faculty itself had been sending telegrams of similar spirit, addressing not only the senators and congressmen of the state, but the President of the United States. Flabbergasted, the "German-Americans" retired; they were confused and disgusted by this higher-up outbreak of unneutrality—it overwhelmed them that citizens of the United States should not remain neutral in the dispute between the United States and Germany. All day the campus was in ferment.

At twilight, Ramsey was walking meditatively on his way to dinner at the "frat house," across the campus from his apartment at Mrs. Meigs'. Everything was quiet now, both town and gown; the students were at their dinners and so were the burghers. Ramsey was late, but did not quicken his thoughtful steps, which were those of one lost in reverie. He had forgotten that springtime was all about him and, with his head down, walked unregardful of the new gayeties flung forth upon the air by great clusters of flowering shrubs, just come into white blossom and lavender.

He was unconscious that somebody behind him, going the same way, came hastening to overtake him and called his name, "Ramsey! Ramsey Milholland!" Not until he had been called three times did he realize that he was being hailed—and in a girl's voice! By that time the girl herself was beside him, and Ramsey halted, quite taken aback. The girl was Dora Yocum.

She was pale, a little breathless, and her eyes were bright and severe. "I want to speak to you," she said, quickly. "I want to ask you about something. Mr. Colburn and Fred Mitchell are the only people I know in your 'frat' except you, and I haven't seen either of them today, or I'd have asked one of them."

Most uncomfortably astonished, Ramsey took his hands out of his pockets, picked a leaf from a lilac bush beside the path, and put the stem of the leaf seriously into a corner of his mouth, before finding anything to say. "Well—well, all right," he finally responded. "I'll tell you—if it's anything I know about."

"You know about it," said Dora. "That is, you certainly do if you were at your 'frat' meeting last night. Were you?"

"Yes, I was there," Ramsey answered, wondering what in the world she wanted to know, though he supposed vaguely that it must be something about Colburn, whom he had several times seen walking with her. "Of course I couldn't tell you much," he added, with an afterthought. "You see, a good deal that goes on at a 'frat' meeting isn't supposed to be talked about."

"Yes," she said, smiling faintly, though with a satire that missed him. "I've been a member of a sorority since September, and I think I have an idea of what could be told or not told. Suppose we walk on, if you don't mind. My question needn't embarrass you."

Nevertheless, as they slowly went on together, Ramsey was embarrassed. He felt "queer." They had known each other so long; in a way had shared so much, sitting daily for years near each other and undergoing the same outward experiences; they had almost "grown up together," yet this was the first time they had ever talked together or walked together.

"Well—" he said. "If you want to ask anything it's all right for me to tell you—well, I just as soon, I guess."

"It has nothing to do with the secret proceedings of your 'frat,'" said Dora, primly. "What I want to ask about has been talked of all over the place today. Everyone has been saying it was your 'frat' that sent the first telegram to members of the government offering support in case of war with Germany. They say you didn't even wait until today, but sent off a message last night. What I wanted to ask you was whether this story is true or not?"

"Why, yes," said Ramsey, mildly. "That's what we did."

She uttered an exclamation, a sound of grief and of suspicion confirmed. "Ah! I was afraid so!"

"'Afraid so?' What's the matter?" he asked, and because she seemed excited and troubled, he found himself not quite so embarrassed as he had been at first; for some reason her agitation made him feel easier. "What was wrong about that?"

"Oh, it's all so shocking and wicked and mistaken!" she cried. "Even the faculty has been doing it, and half the other 'frats' and sororities! And

"Yes, we did," he said, thoroughly puzzled. "We're the oldest 'frat' here, and of course"—he chuckled modestly—"of course we think we're the best. Do you mean you believe we ought to've sat back and let somebody else start it?"

"Oh, no!" she answered, vehemently. "Nobody ought to have started it! That's the trouble; don't you see? If nobody had started it none of it might have happened. The rest mightn't have caught it. It mightn't have got into their heads. A war thought is the most contagious thought in the world; but if it can be kept from starting, it can be kept from being contagious. It's just when people have got into an emotional state, or a state of smouldering rage, that everybody ought to be so terribly careful not to think war thoughts or make war speeches—or send war telegrams! I thought—oh,

There Was Something Human About Her, Then, After All.

I was so sure I'd convinced Mr. Colburn of all this, the last time we talked of it! He seemed to understand, and I was sure he agreed with me." She bit her lip. "He was only pretending—I see that now!"

"I guess he must 'a' been," said Ramsey, with admirable simplicity. "He didn't talk about anything like that last night. He was as much for it as anybody."

"I've no doubt!"

Ramsey made bold to look at her out of the side of his eye, and as she was gazing tensely forward he continued his observation for some time. She was obviously controlling agitation, almost controlling tears, which seemed to threaten her very wide-open eyes; for those now fully grown and noticeable eye-winkers of hers were subject to fluctuations indicating such a threat. She looked "hurt," and Ramsey was touched. There was something human about her, then, after all. And if he had put his feeling into words at the moment, he would have said that he guessed maybe he could stand this ole girl, for a few minutes sometimes better than he'd always thought he could.

"Well," he said, "Colburn prob'ly wouldn't want to hurt your feelings or anything. Colburn—"

"He? He didn't! I haven't the faintest personal interest in what he did."

"Oh!" said Ramsey. "Well, excuse me; I thought prob'ly you were sore because he'd jollied you about this pacifist stuff, and then—"

"No!" she said, sharply. "I'm not thinking of his having agreed with me and fooling me about it. He just wanted to make a pleasant impression on a girl, and said anything he thought would please her. I don't care whether he does things like that or not. What I care about is that the principle didn't reach him and that he mocked it! I don't care about a petty treachery to me, personally, but I—"

Fraternal loyalty could not quite brook this. "Brother Colburn is a perfectly honor'ble man," said Ramsey, solemnly. "He is one of the most honor'ble men in this—"

"Of course!" she cried. "Oh, can't I make you understand that I'm not condemning him for a little flattery to me? I don't care two straws for his showing that I didn't influence him. He doesn't interest me, please understand."

Ramsey was altogether perplexed. "Well, I don't see what makes you go for him so hard, then."

"I don't."

"But you said he was treach—"

"I don't condemn him for it," she insisted, despairingly. "Don't you see the difference? I'm not condemning anybody; I'm only lamenting."

"What about?"

"About all of you that want war!"

"My golly!" Ramsey exclaimed. "You don't think those Dutchmen were right to drown babies and—"

"No! I think they were ghastly murderers! I think they were detestable and fiendish and monstrous and—"

"Well, then, my goodness! What do you want?"

"I don't want war!"

"You don't?"

"I want Christianity!" she cried. "I can't think of the Germans without hating them, and so today, when all the world is hating them, I keep myself from thinking of them as much as I can. Already half the world is full of war; you want to go to war to make things right, but it won't; it will only make more war!"

"Well, I—"

"Don't you see what you've done, what you've done with your absurd telegram? That started the rest: they thought they all had to send telegrams like that."

"Well, the faculty—"

"Even they mightn't have thought of it if it hadn't been for the first one. Vengeance is the most terrible thought; once you put it into people's minds that they ought to have it, it runs away with them."

"Well, it isn't mostly vengeance we're after, at all. There's a lot more to it than just getting even with—"

She did not heed him. "You're all blind! You don't see what you're doing; you don't even see what you've done to this peaceful place here. You've filled it full of thoughts of fury and killing and massacre—"

"Why, no," said Ramsey. "It was those Dutch did that to us; and, besides, there's more to it than you—"

"No, there isn't," she interrupted. "It's just the old brutal spirit that nations inherit from the time they were only tribes; it's the tribe spirit, and an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. It's those things and the love of fighting—men have always loved to fight. Civilization hasn't taken it out of them; men still have the brute in them that loves to fight!"

"I don't think so," said Ramsey. "Americans don't love to fight; I don't know about other countries, but we don't. Of course, here, and there, there's some fellow that likes to hunt around for scraps, but I never saw more than three or four in my life that acted that way. Of course a football team often has a scrapper or two on it, but that's different."

"No," she said. "I think you all really love to fight."

Ramsey was roused to become argumentative. "I don't see where you get the idea. Colburn isn't that way, and back at school there wasn't a single boy that was anything like that."

"What!" She stopped, and turned suddenly to face him.

"What's the matter?" he said, stopping, too. Something he said had startled her, evidently.

"How can you say such a thing?" she cried. "You love to fight!"

"Me?"

"You do! You love fighting. You always have loved fighting."

He was dumfounded. "Why, I never had a fight in my life!"

She cried out in protest of such prevarication.

"Well, I never did," he insisted, mildly.

"Why, you had a fight about me!"

"No, I didn't."

"With Wesley Bender!"

Ramsey chuckled. "That wasn't a fight!"

"It wasn't?"

"Nothing like one. We were just guyin' him about—about gettin' slicked up, kind of, because he sat in front of you; and he hit me with his book strap and I chased him off. Gracious, no; that wasn't a fight!"

"But you fought Linski only last fall."

Ramsey chuckled again. "That wasn't even as much like a fight as the one with Wesley. I just told this Linski I was goin' to give him a punch in the sn—— I just told him to look out because I was goin' to hit him, and then I did it, and waited to see if he wanted to do anything about it, and he didn't. That's all there was to it, and it wasn't any more like fighting than—than feeding chickens is."

She laughed dolefully. "It seems to me rather more like it than that!"

"Well, it wasn't."

They had begun to walk on again, and Ramsey was aware that they had passed the "frat house," where his dinner was probably growing cold. He was aware of this, but not sharply or insistently. Curiously enough, he did not think about it. He had begun to find something pleasant in the odd interview, and in walking beside a girl, even though the girl was Dora Yocum. He made no attempt to account to himself for anything so peculiar.

For a while they went slowly together, not speaking, and without destination, though Ramsey vaguely took it for granted that Dora was going somewhere. But she wasn't. They emerged from the part of the small town closely built about the university and came out upon a bit of parked land overlooking the river; and here Dora's steps slowed to an indeterminate halt near a bench beneath a maple tree.

(To be continued.)